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RELATIVE TO THE WORK
OF
HEALTH OFFICERS
AND OF
LOCAL BOARDS OF HEALTH
IN MICHIGAN.

Circular No. 28, from the

STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
OF MICHIGAN.



CIRCULAR TO HEALTH OFFICERS.

[28.]

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE BOARD OF HEALTH, }
LANSING, MICHIGAN, JUNE, 1878. }

To the Health Officer :

SIR:—A number of Health Officers, lately appointed under Act No. 56 Laws of Michigan, 1877, which provides for a Health Officer in every township, city, and village in the State, have asked for an outline of the duties of this officer as a “sanitary adviser” of the local board of health. In order to respond to these inquiries more fully than by the letters and documents already sent, this circular is issued. It is similar in some respects to circulars 19 and 21 issued by this Board last year.

The constitution of township boards of health was changed in 1877, sections 1692 and 1693 being so amended as to provide that “in every township the township board shall be the board of health,” and that “every township [city, and village] board of health shall appoint and constantly have a health officer of the township who shall, where practicable, be a physician and sanitary adviser, and an executive officer of the board.” If no health officer is appointed “within thirty days after the annual township meeting,” it will become necessary to appoint one after that time, to fill the vacancy. Vacancies also occur whenever the incumbent of an office ceases to be an inhabitant of the district, county, township, city, or village for which he was elected or appointed an officer,—see section 617, Compiled Laws of Michigan, 1871.

Before entering upon his duties the health officer should take and subscribe the official oath required by Sec. 1, Art. xviii. of the Constitution of this State, and file the same in the office of the clerk of the city, village, or township of which he is the Health Officer.

Some of the powers and duties of local boards of health are specified in Chapter 46 of the Compiled Laws of Michigan, 1871.

This chapter was constructed more particularly with reference to township boards of health, but section 49 of the same chapter (chapter 35 of the Revised Statutes of 1846, and chapter 46 of the Compiled Laws, 1871) makes it apply to cities and villages. That section is as follows :

(1740.) SEC. 49. The mayor and aldermen of each incorporated city, and the president and council, or trustees, of each incorporated village in this state, shall have and exercise all the powers and perform all the duties of a board of health, as provided in this chapter, within the limits of the cities or villages, respectively, of which they are such officers.

In order to dispel any doubts respecting the force and application of this section, the opinion of the Attorney General of the State has been obtained on this subject. His opinion is as follows :

"In reply, I beg leave to say that the officers mentioned in section 1740, Compiled Laws of 1871, are required to carry out, in all respects, the provisions of chapter 46 Compiled Laws, unless the charters of the respective cities and villages have made other provision for guarding the public health. It is impossible to say, in the abstract, how far charter provisions may stand side by side with general enactments, such as chapter 46, Compiled Laws, or how far one may modify the other. Each case must stand upon its own basis. Of course it follows from what I have stated, that a 'health officer' must be appointed in cities and villages whose charter provisions do not conflict with the general law.

"Very respectfully,

"OTTO KIRCHNER, Attorney General."

It is believed that there is nothing in the charter of any city or village in the State that conflicts with the general law which requires the appointment of a Health Officer.

One great object in securing a Physician as Health Officer was to enable each local board of health to lead and not, as too frequently heretofore, to follow the people in sanitary knowledge and action. As a rule our physicians are our leading sanitarians, and they know much better than other people what are the sources of danger to the public health in their several localities; and, as a rule, they know best how to avoid those dangers. It is therefore for the interest of the people to secure the benefits of that knowledge by paying for the services and advice of the best sanitarian, who will usually be the best physician, in their locality.

If it is true that responsibilities are in proportion to capacities and powers, then a local board of health, which, as in this State, has almost absolute power, must be held responsible for any sick-

ness or death that might have been prevented by a proper use of its legal powers; and an individual Health Officer employed and paid for sanitary advice who does not use the sanitary knowledge of which he is possessed, in a way to make it as effective as possible for preventing sickness and deaths in his vicinity, is especially culpable.

Although as "an executive officer of the board" your power and authority to act will be only that given you by your board, as a "sanitary adviser" you should, and doubtless will, have influence in determining the action of your board, in proportion to your knowledge of sanitary science and your honest effort for the promotion of the public health.

There are many directions in which you can advise your local board of health how to put forth effort for lessening sickness and deaths within its jurisdiction:

I. EPIDEMICS SHOULD BE PREVENTED.—This can generally be done, if local boards of health will but act efficiently in studying out and applying methods which are now practicable. One of the first requisites is that your board shall promptly receive notice of every case of communicable disease. The law makes provision therefor; see sections 1734, 1735, 6852, 6853, and 6855, Compiled Laws of Michigan, 1871. It is especially desirable that the attention of the public in your vicinity be called to the requirements of these sections of the law, and the fact impressed upon their minds, that safety from contagious diseases can be secured only by giving prompt notice of the first case of such disease, to the health officer or local board of health, in order that immediate steps may be taken for restricting and suppressing such disease. To complete the provision for such notices is one of the first duties of your board. It is again recommended that your board of health *have a sufficient number of blanks for such notices printed for the use of householders and physicians within your jurisdiction, and distribute them*, in order to call attention to the law and secure the material for a complete record in your office and in the office of the clerk of your board. The two sections of law, 1734 and 1735, and summary statements of sections 6852, 6853, and 6855, referred to above, should be printed on the back of each blank. You can also find the form for such blanks for notices on pages 13 and 14 of the First Report, and on pages xiii. and xiv. of the Second Report of this

Board, also in amended form on the last sheet of the pamphlet "Circular 25, Relative to Notices of Diseases which endanger the Public Health," a copy of which is sent herewith. These blanks can be purchased of W. S. George & Co., of Lansing, for one dollar per hundred.

II. COMMUNICABLE DISEASES SHOULD BE RESTRICTED.—When notice or information of the occurrence of a case of a communicable disease reaches the local board, the board should act promptly for the restriction of the disease. The prominent duties in this direction are: 1, Prompt, thorough, and persistent isolation of the persons sick; 2, Thorough disinfection of rooms occupied, and of all articles likely to be infected, before allowing their use by other persons;* 3, As regards small-pox, the vaccination and re-vaccination of all inhabitants.

III. CASES OF DISEASES WHICH ENDANGER THE PUBLIC HEALTH SHOULD BE RECORDED.—Another duty incumbent upon the local board of health, is the recording of the sickness from communicable diseases, and the deaths of citizens and persons under its care; such records to be for local use and also to be reported to this Board, so that, when grouped with records of other localities, the conditions may be studied, and new methods of prevention learned from such unhappy experiences which otherwise will continually be repeated. A form of "Record of Diseases Dangerous to the Public Health" is printed (reduced in size), at the end of this circular. You can procure printed sheets of such a record, on paper $15\frac{1}{2}$ by $19\frac{1}{2}$ inches, of W. S. George & Co., of Lansing, for eighty cents per quire or three dollars per hundred. If desired, the same dealers will bind them at usual prices. It is hoped that hereafter you will, as Health Officer, be prepared and make a record of all important facts concerning "diseases dangerous to the public health," which may come under your observation or be reported to you. Aside from the importance of such a local record, it will enable you, when called upon, to make a full report to this State Board† concerning cases of such diseases.

*For methods, see pamphlet entitled "Restriction and Prevention of Scarlet Fever," issued by this Board, sent herewith, and also reprinted in the Fifth Annual Report of this Board.

†Act No. 81, Laws of 1873, Sec. 8: "It shall be the duty of the health physician, and also of the clerk of the local board of health in each township, city, and village in this State, at least once in each year, to report to the State Board of Health their proceedings, and such other facts required, on blanks and in accordance with instructions received from said State Board. They shall also make special reports whenever required to do so by the State Board of Health."

IV. MUCH SICKNESS AND MANY DEATHS FROM ORDINARY DISEASES SHOULD BE PREVENTED.—A field of labor, perhaps even wider than that with the communicable diseases, is open to your local board of health, namely, the inauguration of measures for preventing sickness and deaths from the ordinary diseases in this State, a very great proportion of which are now believed by our best sanitarians to be preventable. Some of the prominent measures to be inaugurated are: 1, More thorough drainage of the soil, especially near dwellings; 2, Better securities against the contamination of the water-supply, particularly in wells, by filth-saturated soil, etc.; 3, A strict guard over the purity of the air, and freedom from nuisances and unclean places; 4, Better sanitary and hygienic arrangements and plans in the public schools, and in public buildings and institutions.

The local board of health should be a center of sanitary and hygienic intelligence for its locality; its meetings should not be infrequent, and should be so managed as to secure papers or discussions on special subjects and on the application of the principles of sanitary science to the particular sources of danger in the immediate vicinity, and otherwise to encourage progress in sanitary knowledge, among the members of the board as well as among the people. Charged with the duty of guarding the life and health of fellow citizens, the duty of members and officers of boards of health to seek out the best that is known in public hygiene and sanitary methods, seems to be plain.

Many sources of information in sanitary science and public hygiene are now accessible to those who can secure the literature of these subjects. You can doubtless find something of value, without great effort. A knowledge of some of the sources of greatest danger to life in this State may be gained by a study of the Registration Reports on Vital Statistics of Michigan, published by the Secretary of State. These are, or should be, in your township library. About two years ago a pamphlet copy of the Public Health Laws of this State was sent to the health officer of each township, to be delivered to the supervisor if no other health officer was appointed. The first four Annual Reports of this State Board of Health have been sent as issued, and are, or should be, in your township library. Your predecessor in office should pass over to you a copy of the Fourth Annual Report, which was sent to him as

Health Officer, with instructions to hand it to his successor. The Fifth Annual Report will soon be ready for distribution, and it is probable that the Secretary of State will soon send copies for each township library. It is expected that a copy will also be sent by this Board to each Health Officer, or to the County Clerks for each Health Officer. You will find something relative to work of local boards of health and health officers on pages 6, 11, 15, 16, 29, and 30 of the First Report; on pages xi-xv, xxv, and xxviii-xxix of the Second Report; on pages xliii-xlv and 1-10 of the Third Report; and on pages xxxvi, xxxvii, 6, 7, 11-12, 127, 128, 129, and 130 of the Fourth Report.

Your local board of health has two kinds of functions: 1, To utilize for your own people the sanitary knowledge already accessible, as indicated in paragraphs I., II., and III., and elsewhere in this Circular; 2, To add to the general stock of such knowledge. You can make additions to sanitary knowledge by original research, by means of records of experience, by means of vital statistics, which supply an important basis for public hygiene, and by reporting to this Board, which will then eventually be able to give to each local board the benefits of the experience of all the others.

It is hoped that you will correspond freely with this Board. Whenever there occurs, in your locality, any outbreak of a communicable or preventable disease, it is expected that you will inquire into, study, and record the conditions coincident with the rise, progress, and decline of any such outbreak, and, besides making the local record, be prepared to make a valuable report to this Board. In case any disease appears in your locality as an epidemic, please send a Special Report of the facts to this office as soon as possible. It is particularly desirable that you study and record the conditions coincident with the rise, progress, and decline of any epidemic. Every such instance of suffering in your locality should be made to yield some valuable data useful for advancing the cause of public health.

By direction of the State Board of Health.

Very Respectfully,

HENRY B. BAKER,

Secretary.

[Please preserve the circulars received from this office.]

RECORD OF CASES OF DISEASES DANGEROUS TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH WHICH HAVE OCCURRED

RECORD NUMBER.	RECEIVED FOR RECORD.		FULL NAME OF PATIENT.	Sex.	Age in years, last Birth- day.	NAME OF DISEASE.
	Month.	Day. Year.				

IN THE.....OF....., COUNTY OF....., STATE OF MICHIGAN.

TAKEN SICK.		WHETHER DIED, LIVING, OR RECOVERED.	DATE OF DEATH OR RECOVERY.		PERSONS WHO FURNISHED THE FACTS FOR RECORD.	
Month.	Day. Year.		Month.	Day. Year.	NAME.	P. O. ADDRESS.

The reported source of Contagion or infection, in each case, was as follows: For the case recorded as No. it was.....

[Blank sheets of Record, similar to the form here indicated, on paper 15½ by 19½ inches, printed on both sides alike, so as to be bound in book form, can be procured of W. S. George & Co., Lansing, Mich., for 80 cents per quire, or \$3.00 per hundred. If desired, the same dealers will bind them at usual rates.]